

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 11, 2016

Agenda Item: 2016-2017 Bison Hunting Seasons and HD Boundaries

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background

Season structures and hunting district boundaries are adopted biennially for most game species. This happens every other year between December and final adoptions in February. In proposing regulations to the Commission, FWP proposes adopting the existing (2015) structure except for specific changes. Proposals are based on population status and/or other circumstances.

For the 2016 and 2017 bison season, structure changes include eliminating the separate time periods for licenses and making licenses valid for the entire season for both the Gardiner and West Yellowstone hunting districts. For the Gardiner-Absaroka Beartooth hunting district 385 FWP proposes introducing either-sex backcountry licenses in the Absaroka Beartooth portion. This differs from the December adoption in that the proposal for introducing cow/calf licenses and lowering either-sex licenses has been dropped. All other aspects of the 2015 regulations are to remain unchanged. All of these changes are referenced in the Bison Master List in the Commission packet.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Bison season comments were received during scoping and included interest in more hunting opportunity and allocation of harvest among non-tribal/tribal hunters. Public comment ran from Dec. 10 to Jan 22. We received 51 comments. Twenty-six spoke to wanting more opportunity including opening the season in September. Others spoke to regulating tribal harvest, landowner preference, points for the drawing system, and 2 were against hunting bison. All comments are included in the Commission packet.

Alternatives and Analysis

Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, with deletions or no change from 2015 (status quo). No change would challenge the supporting justifications behind proposals.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

Rationale for individual proposals was included in the Dec. 10th Commission information packets and may be further articulated at the Feb. 11th Commission meeting.

Proposed Motion

I move the Commission adopt the final 2016 and 2017 Bison Hunting Seasons and Hunting Districts as presented by FWP. I also move to adopt all other portions of the previous 2014-2015 bison season regulations not affected by the Commission's actions today.